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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between observed behaviors and attitudes of black fathers and the association of these paternal measures with the self-identity of their preschool children. Twenty-one working and middle class suburban black families were studied. Four black male interviewers were trained to collect the parent-child interaction in two interviews. Verbal and nonverbal interactions between the father and child were recorded. Results indicated that the fathers of this study exhibited a warm nurturant attitude in their verbal interactions with their children. The fathers of boys were more nurturant than the fathers of girls. There were very few restrictive kinds of father-child interaction. Fathers interacted verbally more with their sons and more nonverbally with their daughters. The children in this sample had high self concept scores. The fathers' attitudes toward child-rearing practices seemed to fall into the moderately strict categories. These findings contradict the stereotype of black fathers as well as the findings of a number of past studies. (Author/MS)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OBSERVED PATERNAL ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOR, AND SELF-ESTEEM OF BLACK PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

John L. McAdoo

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In reviewing the literature on father-child interaction in Black families there appears to be very little information on the impact of that interaction and the child's self-esteem. Traditionally social psychologists have studied the impact of father-absence on the sex role development (Biller, 1971) or cognitive development (Hess, Shipman, 1968), and achievement motivation, etc. However, there appears to be an assumption in social scientific research that Black families are matriarchal (Moynihan, 1965) in nature and further, there is something pathological about the effects of that structure on the Black child.

The research focus on Black families has centered on mother-child interactions and its effects on achievement motivation, IQ, and sex role. Much of the research attempted to justify the cultural deficit model attached to Black family junctions. The role of the Black father is portrayed to be that of an invisible man, who has no power in the family and who is assumed not to be interested in the socialization of his children. The present study examines the relationship between observed behaviors and attitudes of Black fathers and the association of these paternal measures with the self-identity of their preschool children. This research is a part of a larger ongoing study of Black parent-child interaction and their relationship to the development of social competence of preschool aged boys and girls being carried out by Dr. Harriette McAdoo, and myself.

The study utilizes the symbolic interaction perspective as a theoretical framework. This perspective allows us to examine the "how" of the socialization process. The interaction that takes place between the parent and child lays the foundation for the total social, cognitive, and moral development of that child. While few empirical based studies have been conducted on the child rearing practices in Black families, there is an extensive theoretical, as well as experimental, literature on parental behavior and its influence on young children (Dyk and Witkin, 1965; Kagen, 1968; Sears, 1963; Radin, 1972). Most of the above studies reviewed the mothers' reports of fathers' behaviors or attitudes to draw inferences about fathers' influences in child rearing practices. Baldwin (1973), Yarrow, Campbell, and Burton (1970) have noted the inadequacy of the above approaches.

Until recently, there were few reports based upon the direct observation of the interaction between parents and children, and even fewer reports on Black families. Radin (1972) notes that none of the researchers (Baumrind, 1971; Lytton, 1973; Faget, 1974) who studied fathers and children included lower class.

Radin (1972; 1975) focused on the effects of antecedent behaviors of the father on the cognitive development of his child. While other researchers (Biller and Blanchard, 1971; Kagen, 1968; Dyk and Witkin, 1971; Sears, 1953) focused upon the role fathers play in the development of sex role identification, cognitive competence, and/or adaptive social behavior, very few of the above studies have attempted to evaluate parental behavior that leads to

social competence in their children. Few of the studies reviewed have developed instruments to observe Black fathers interacting with their children without other family members present.

We define a socially competent child as one who exhibits a positive feeling of self-worth, who exhibits a drive for and a feeling of achievement, and who has a feeling of some degree of control over their environment (White and Watts, 1973). While the social and emotional factors in the development of competence is the main focus, other data suggest that a socially competent child will also do well in the classroom and thus, be prepared to achieve in school and later occupational endeavors. He will also develop a healthy ethnic identity.

It is suggested that the development of a positive self-esteem is the key variable in developing socially competent children. McAdoo (H. 1972) extensively reviewed the literature relating to the Black preschool child's self-esteem and ethnic identity. It was noted that the Black preschool child's self-esteem appears to be more positive than in the past and a suggestion was made that the improved social and political circumstances of the Black family may account for the change.

Since changing social conditions have some effect upon parenting styles, it is important that we observe parenting styles in Black families and determine their effects on the Black child's self-esteem. Paternal nurturance and restrictiveness are two parenting styles that have been found to be related to the cognitive development in white preschool children (Radin, 1972). For the purposes of this

study we will attempt to determine the relationship of nurturance and restrictiveness on the development of a positive identity in Black children.

It has been noted (Radin, 1972) that several theorists have suggested that paternal warmth (nurturance) facilitates the child's identification with him, particularly in the male child. Identification with the father should lead to the child's incorporation of the father's ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the child. The father communicates a positive acceptance of the child as a person. The literature indicates that intellectual achievement is related to early parent independence granting and early expectations of mastery behavior of the child.

It follows from the above, although not empirically tested, that parental restrictiveness would not facilitate positive communication and paternal identification by the child. Restrictiveness in the parent suggests negative reaction to the child behavior and attempt to handle the symptom and not the needs of the child, controlling behavior, a cutting off of the usual patterns of identification and communication with the child. Restrictiveness in the father could lead the child to develop a negative image of himself and his worth as a human being, as well as negative feelings about those around him. Radin (1975) has found that children of restrictive parents do poorly in kindergarten.

Black parents are stereotyped as being restrictive in their rearing attitudes and Black children in the past have scored low on achievement and self-esteem tests. Very few articles were found

that attempted to look at antecedent parental behavior and social competence in Black preschool children. We are interested in determining if there is a correlation between parental nurturance and positive self-esteem. Our hypothesis suggests that there is a positive relationship between paternal nurturance and the preschool child's self-esteem.

Method

Sample

Twenty-one working and middle class Black families living in the suburban town of Columbia, Maryland, located in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area were studied. The families were selected through nursery schools and door-to-door canvas in Columbia.

Procedure

Four Black male interviewers were trained to collect the parent-child interaction in two interviews. The first interview was with the entire family to explain the project, to gain their permission for participation, to ask some socio-economic background data, and to help the child feel relaxed around the interviewer. In the second interview only the father and the child were present during the hour and a half session. The interviewers were trained to observe and record the verbal and non-verbal interactions between the father and child. They were trained over a three week period by using a video recorder, and role playing, of an actual interview situation with a parent and child. The interviewers

achieved a reliability which ranged from .80 to .92, with the average being .85.

In addition, three verbal coders were trained in the same period of time to score the verbal interactions from the tape. They achieved a much higher reliability with the average being .92. They were also trained to score the non-verbal interaction scores. Finally, two female child testers were trained to administer the Thomas Self-Concept tests.

The interview consisted of the Cognitive Home Environment Scale (Radin and Sonquist, 1968) as well as a number of questions to elicit demographic data and information on the father's child rearing attitudes. Information was also elicited on the father's perception of ethnic differences in child rearing patterns. At the end of the interview, the child was given a number of puzzles to complete, to justify his/her presence. Having the child remain in the room required that at some point the father would have to exert some control to keep the child in line, both verbal and non-verbal.

All verbal interactions between the father and his child during the interview were recorded on a tape recorder. Trained coders later coded the tapes. The non-verbal interactions were recorded by an interviewer on a form at 29 points in the interview. All behaviors were coded at 15 second intervals for two minutes on a scale developed by Harriette McAdoo, Joseph Teresa, and myself. The non-verbal interactions were recorded across five different categories: (1) tone of voice; (2) type of physical contact; (3) parent's explicit response

to child's behavior; (4) parent implicitly responding; and (5) no interaction.

A week later the child was seen on two different occasions in the office where he received the Thomas Self-Concept values test (Thomas, 1972). The Thomas Self-Concept values test purports to measure the child's self-concept through the use of questions based upon the child's own Polaroid photograph. The child was asked to give his view of himself and then assumed the position of three "significant others" in his life (mother, teacher, peer) and to give his perception of how these people view him. The questions form a core of fourteen bi-polar adjectives, items representing the value on which the child reported his perceptions.

The Thomas items are presented in an "either-or" format, using the child's own name, i.e., "Is David happy or is David sad?", while referring to the child's own picture. The more desirable choice was scored +1. The +1 items across all categories were added together to get a total score of the child's view of himself. The H. McAdoo (1972) modification of the Thomas scoring was used to gain a perception of the father's view of the child.

For the purposes of this study, the Thomas test was modified to make the scale more appropriate to contemporary functioning. Thomas' original test did not include the father as a key reference person and we felt that he should be included. In addition, the Thomas asked "how the child liked to be with men" and did not ask a comparable question about women. Therefore, this question was also added.

We then proceeded to restandardize the Thomas scores using the added reference groups. We had collected data from 100 Black preschool children in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area upon which the data was analyzed and standardized scores were developed. This was felt to be preferable to using the original Thomas pool of over 300 Grand Rapids, Michigan sample collected from Head Start Centers in the 1960's. These new standardized scores are the ones now being used. The data were analyzed using frequency percentage scores, means and standard deviations, Pearson product moment and point bi-serial correlations, and the usage of the test.

Results

There was a significantly positive relationship (P .01) between the warmth and nurturance of the Black father and the amount of interactions he had with his child. The more nurturing the Black fathers were, the greater amount of positive interaction he had with his child. See Table 1. There is a non-significant tendency toward a relationship between nurturance interaction and sex of the child. See Table 2.

The children felt good about themselves. The mean in the total self-concept was 53.19. This was in the total self-concept positive score mean. There were no sex differences in the self-concept measure. The boys had a mean of 52.43 and the girls had a mean of 54.71, both above the average standard score of 50 for the Thomas Self-Concept. See Table 3.

There were no significant sex differences on the Thomas original and revised self-concept tests. There was a non-significant trend

between the interaction and sex of the father, with the boys mean score being greater than the girls. Fathers had almost twice as many interactions with their sons than with their daughters.

There was a significant sex difference (P .05) in the number of nurturant interactions. Boys received significantly more verbal nurturant interactions than girls. See Table 4. The fathers interacted more with boys and when they talked to them, it tended to be in a supportive manner. This is contrary to the literature and common beliefs that Black fathers are restrictive, especially towards the boys.

The fathers were asked their opinions about other aspects of family functioning and child rearing practices. To the question of how much time the Black fathers spent playing with their children, 38% of the fathers spent less than one hour daily playing with their children, while 33% played one to two hours with their children. Twenty-four percent reported playing more than two hours with them. The playtime was broken down by sex. Of the boys' fathers, 50% spent less than one hour playing with them. Forty-three percent of the girls' fathers spent between one and two hours playing with them. The girls were played with more than the boys. See Table 5.

The majority of the fathers (81%) played physical games with their children rather than games emphasizing cognitive (14%) or social (5%) development. There were no sex differences for the fathers playfully interacting on a physical level with both sons (79%) and daughters (86%) equally. See Table 5.

In response to questions related to approvable actions of their children, types of approval, and reasons for the most recent approval, 67% of the fathers rewarded their children for good behavior, as opposed to rewarding them for showing independent or assertive actions (29%), with a few who didn't know (5%). There were slight sex differences as more girls (86%) than boys (57%) were rewarded for good behavior. However, a greater number of boys (36%) than girls (14%) were rewarded for assertive-independent behavior. See Table 6.

The majority of the fathers (57%) noted that they would show praise for acts that they approved by telling the child (verbal reinforcement) when he approves of the child's actions, while 33% of the fathers would hug and/or kiss the child and 5% would smile or use body gestures. Five percent of the fathers did not respond to the question. There were no sex differences for fathers who would tell the child when he was pleased, as 57% of the boys' and 57% of the girls' fathers would do so. More of the boys' fathers (43%) noted that they would hug, kiss, and praise, than the girls' fathers (14%). See Table 6.

Forty-three percent of Black fathers recently rewarded their child for good behavior, while 14% rewarded their child for independent-assertive behavior and 14% of the fathers rewarded their children for doing nothing at all, and 14% didn't recall; 10% rewarded their children for being affectionate. There were no sex differences in the rewards for good behavior as both boys(83%) and girls (43%) were equal. More boys (29%) were rewarded for doing nothing, than girls (7%). See Table 6.

In response to a series of questions relating to the fathers perceived strictness, 53% of the fathers reported that they were moderately strict with their children. Twenty-four percent of the fathers noted that they were very strict and 14% of the fathers did not feel that they were strict. The majority of the fathers (48%) reported that they were somewhat strict with their children, while 24% of them noted that they were very strict as opposed to 14% who did not feel that they were strict. More fathers of boys (29%) than fathers of girls (14%) felt that they were strict. There were slight sex differences as 57% of the boys' and 43% of the girls' fathers felt that they were somewhat strict. See Table 7.

Sixty-two percent of the fathers felt that their children should obey them immediately, while 29% of them felt that there was no need to obey them immediately, and 5% didn't care of those fathers who responded. Seventy-one percent of boys' fathers and 43% of girls' fathers felt that their child should obey immediately, while more girls' (43%) than boys'(21%) fathers felt that their child did not need to obey immediately. See Table 7.

To the question as to whether or not they would allow angry kicking or shouting from their children, 62% of those who responded would not allow angry kicking and shouting from their children, while 24% noted that they would seldom allow it, and 5% would allow their child to do it frequently. More fathers of girls (86%) than boys (50%) would not allow angry kicking or shouting, while more boys' fathers (36%) than girls' fathers (0%) would allow a few outbursts of angry kicking and shouting. See Table 7.

The fathers were asked if they felt that Black parents were stricter than parents of other ethnic groups. Fifty-seven percent of all fathers interviewed felt that Black parents were more strict than white parents. Nineteen percent felt that they were about the same and 7% felt that they were less strict and 19% didn't know. Slightly more boys' fathers (64%) than girls' fathers felt that Black parents were more strict and there were very little sex differences between those who answered that they were about the same, with boys' (21%) and girls' (14%) fathers being about equal. See Table 7.

In response to the question concerning whether or not they were raising their children exactly as they had been raised, 71% of the Black fathers felt that they were not raising their child exactly the way that they were raised. Fourteen percent felt that they were raising their children exactly the way that they were raised, and 10% answered that they were partially raising their children the way they were raised. Slightly more girls' (86%) than boys' (64%) fathers felt that they were raising their children exactly the way they were raised. See Table 7.

The fathers were given a hypothetical situation in which they had a son and a daughter and could only educate one child. They were asked which would they educate, the boy or the girl. Sixty-two percent of all of the fathers said the boy should be given preference for further education, as opposed to 19% who felt that they should be equally educated and 19% who did not respond. Not a single one said the girl should be given preference. Seventy-nine percent of the boys' fathers and 29% of the girls' fathers felt that boys should

be educated. It is significant that none of the boys' or girls' fathers chose the girl to be educated, while little difference was shown between the boys' (21%) and the girls' (14%) fathers in choosing both to be educated. See Table 8.

When asked whether their child's needs come before their own needs, 71% of the fathers indicated that their needs come second to their child's. Fourteen percent noted that this was sometimes true, while 10% of them said no, and 7% did not respond. Eighty-seven percent of the boys' fathers and 33% of the girls' fathers responded that their needs come second to their children's, while 33% of the girls' fathers and none of the boys' fathers noted that their needs come first. See Table 8.

When asked who made the main decisions in the family, two-thirds of the fathers (67%) felt that both parents make the major family decisions together, while 14% felt that the mother alone makes the decision, and 10% felt that the father alone makes the decisions. Slightly more fathers of boys (71%) than girls (57%) felt that they both made the major decisions. There were no significant sex differences between boys' fathers and girls' fathers in the mother alone or father alone categories. See Table 8.

The non-verbal interactions recorded during the interview during 29-120 second segments were broken down by sex of the child. The fathers' mean frequency of interaction was twice as high for the girls as for the boys (girls M= 54.71; boys M= 22.71). The range of total frequency for the girls was from 6- 127, with a large SD of 43. See Table 9.

There was no sex difference in the number of 120 second intervals in which no interactions occurred. The fathers did not interact non-verbally with their children over two-thirds of the time frame. When they did interact, they interacted twice as much with their daughters. See Table 9.

Summary

The fathers of this study exhibited a warm nurturant attitude in their verbal interactions with their children. The fathers of boys were more nurturant than the fathers of girls. There were very little restrictive kinds of father-child interaction that characterized the Radin (1972) study.

The fathers in this sample did not interact a great deal on a non-verbal level with their children. When they did, they interacted twice as much with their daughters as they did with their sons.

Fathers interacted verbally more with their sons and more non-verbally with their daughters. Non-nurturant and restrictive behavior happened so seldomly that we could not analyze that data with this size sample.

The children in this sample had high self-concept scores. This finding confirmed our earlier findings (H. McAdoo, 1974) in Michigan, Mississippi, and Washington, D.C.

The fathers' attitudes toward child rearing practices seem to fall into the moderately strict categories. They saw themselves as moderately strict, expected their children to obey commands immediately, and would not allow their children to act up. At the

same time, they saw their child's needs coming before their own, and preferred that boys be educated and trained before girls.

The fathers attitudes toward child rearing practices resemble those of Radin's (1972) restrictive sample and yet we found them to be very warm and nurturant men who had high level of interaction with their children. Their children had high self-concepts.

How do we explain these contradicting findings? Are Blacks becoming less restrictive or is the literature inaccurate? Or is the bahavior we are seeing tempered with the educational status of fathers?

Table 1

Intercorrelations For Four Variables

	Thomas SC Revised	Interaction Total	Nurturance	Thomas SC Original
Thomas SC Revised				
Interaction Total	.1660 (19)			
Nurturance Total	-.0038 (20)	.9696** (19)		
Thomas SC Original Total	.9664** (21)	.1430 (19)	-.0481 (20)	

**= P .01

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbers of complete pairs in 21 pairs.

Table 2

Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient

	Thomas SC Original	Thomas SC Total (+F)	Interaction Total	Nurturance Total	Thomas SC Total (-F)
Restrictive-ness	.136 (20)	.047 (20)	.388 (19)	.344 (20)	.004 (20)
Non-nurtur-ance	.107 (20)	.017 (20)	.351 (19)	.290 (20)	.074 (20)
Occupation	.293 (19)	.052 (19)	.344 (17)	.338 (18)	.018 (19)
Sex	.277 (21)	.107 (21)	.398 (19)	.437 (20)	.018 (21)

$p < .10$

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of complete pairs in the 21 pairs.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation by Sex For The Total Sample on Self-Concept Scores

	N	Mean	SD
Boys	14	52.43	10.65
Girls	7	54.71	9.53
Total	21	53.19	10.11

Table 4

t Test of Major Variables By Sex of Child

Variables	Boys			Girls			df	t
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Thomas SC Original	14	53.3571	7.9092	7	57.4286	3.3594	19	1.2917
Thomas SC Revised	14	52.4286	10.6534	7	54.7143	9.5344	19	.4788
Interaction Total	13	38.1538	27.7724	6	16.3333	10.0929	17	1.8447
Nurturance Total	14	35.0714	25.0951	6	12.3333	9.6056	18	2.1259*

*$p < .05$

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Amount of Time and Games Fathers Play With the Child

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Amount of Time						
Great Deal (2 hrs. & above)	3	(21)	2	(28)	5	(24)
Considerable (1-2 hours)	4	(29)	3	(43)	7	(33)
Some (less than 1 hour)	7	(50)	1	(14)	8	(38)
Little (less than daily)	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
	14		7		21	
Games Fathers Play						
Cognitive Games	2	(14)	1	(14)	3	(14)
Physical Games	11	(79)	6	(86)	17	(81)
Socializing	1	(1)	0	(0)	1	(5)
	14		7		21	

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Methods Used By Fathers to show Approval to Child

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Approvable Actions of Child						
Good Behavior	8	(57)	6	(86)	14	(67)
Independent-Assertive	5	(36)	1	(14)	6	(29)
Don't Recall	1	(7)	0	(0)	1	(5)
	14		7		21	
How Father Shows Approval						
Tells the Child	8	(57)	4	(57)	12	(57)
Hugs, Kisses, Praises	6	(43)	1	(14)	7	(33)
Facial & Body Approvals	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
Missing Data	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
	14		7		21	
Reasons for Recent Approval						
Good Behavior	6	(43)	3	(43)	9	(43)
Independent-Assertive	3	(21)	0	(0)	3	(14)
Household Chores	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
Affectionate	1	(7)	1	(14)	2	(10)
Nothing	1	(7)	2	(29)	3	(14)
Don't Recall	3	(21)	0	(0)	3	(14)
	14		7		21	

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Obedience Patterns
Between Father and Child

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
How Strict Are You With Your Child						
Very Strict	4	(29)	1	(14)	5	(24)
Moderately	8	(57)	3	(43)	11	(53)
Not At All	1	(7)	2	(29)	3	(14)
Missing Data	1	(7)	1	(14)	2	(9)
	14		7		21	
Should Child Obey Right Away						
Obey Immediately	10	(71)	3	(43)	13	(62)
Does not need to immediately	3	(21)	3	(43)	6	(29)
Don't Care	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
Missing Data	1	(7)	0	(0)	1	(5)
	14		7		21	
Amount Angry Kicking and Shouting Allowed						
Frequently	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
Seldom	5	(36)	0	(0)	5	(24)
None Allowed	7	(50)	6	(86)	13	(62)
Missing Data	2	(14)	0	(0)	2	(10)
	14		7		21	
Black Parents Strict As White Parents						
More	9	(64)	3	(43)	12	(57)
About the Same	3	(21)	1	(14)	4	(19)
Less	1	(7)	0	(0)	1	(7)
Don't Know	1	(7)	3	(43)	4	(19)
	14		7		21	
Is Your Child Raised Exactly As You Were						
Yes	3	(21)	0	(0)	3	(14)
Partially	2	(14)	0	(0)	2	(10)
No	9	(64)	6	(86)	15	(71)
Missing Data	0	(0)	1	(14)	1	(5)
	14		7		21	

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Decision Making And The Needs of the Child

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Preference Of Boy Or Girl For Further Education						
Male	11	(79)	2	(29)	13	(62)
Female	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Equally	3	(21)	1	(14)	4	(19)
Missing Data	0	(0)	4	(57)	4	(19)
	14		7		21	
Do Father's Needs Come Second to Child's						
Yes	13	(87)	2	(33)	15	(71)
Sometimes	2	(13)	1	(17)	3	(14)
No	0	(0)	2	(33)	2	(10)
Missing Data	0	(0)	1	(17)	1	(7)
	15		6		21	
Main Decision Maker						
Mother	1	(7)	2	(29)	3	(14)
Father	1	(7)	1	(14)	2	(10)
Both Parents	10	(71)	4	(57)	14	(67)
Missing Data	2	(14)	0	(0)	2	(10)
	14		7		21	

Table 9

Mean and Standard Deviations of Frequency of Non-verbal Interactions During Twenty-Nine 120 Second Intervals

Group	Interactions				Non-Interactions			
	N	Range	M	SD	N	Range	M	SD
Males	14	7-52	22.71	14.94	14	40-157	99.86	33.06
Females	7	6-127	54.71	43.00	7	68-147	107.57	26.78
Total	21	6-127	33.38	30.64	21	40-157	102.43	30.65

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